

Applications now being accepted for statewide grant program aimed at revitalizing neighborhoods

\$1 million available through Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund, including up to \$350,000 in planning grants to local governments

DOVER, Del. (Dec. 10, 2014) – A fund created to help strengthen neighborhoods throughout Delaware hit hardest by the 2008 financial crisis is now up and running.

The Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund was provided initial funding of \$1 million from a settlement that Attorney General Beau Biden secured with JPMorgan Chase & Co. related to the housing crisis. The funding was authorized by the General Assembly in June. The fund is overseen by a board consisting of representatives from the Delaware Economic Development Office, the Delaware Department of Justice, the Delaware State Housing Authority, the Office of State Planning Coordination and the Delaware Community Foundation.

The Neighborhood Building Blocks Board invites neighborhood revitalization programs, neighborhood associations, community groups, law enforcement, local governments and other stakeholders to apply for grants from the fund that support crime reduction, neighborhood revitalization, and economic development programs statewide.

“The Neighborhood Building Blocks Board will put this money to work, strengthening Delaware’s communities,” said Attorney General Biden, who has secured more than \$185 million for Delaware from financial institutions in mortgage crisis settlements since 2012. “We know that stronger communities are safer and are better places to work, live and raise a family. This is an innovative program to help neighborhoods that were hit hardest by the housing crisis rebuild themselves.”

Of the allocated funds, up to \$350,000 has been designated to support local governments in developing strategic and other plans focusing on economic development, crime reduction, residential development or other revitalization efforts. Of that \$350,000, priority will be given to requests by cities, towns, and unincorporated areas for reimbursement of the costs of generating applications for Downtown Development District designation.

The public is invited to attend an informational session regarding the Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund on Thursday, January 8, 2015 at 2 p.m. in the auditorium at the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, 89 Kings Highway SW, Dover.

Economic development is a key facet of the Neighborhood Building Blocks Program, as some Delaware communities have not yet returned to full strength from losses suffered during the recession.

“While employment numbers and job figures show that Delaware is back to pre-recession employment levels, we are aware of areas that have not made it all the way back. Until all of its

communities have recovered, Delaware will not be satisfied,” said Alan Levin, Director of the Delaware Economic Development Office. “The funds, under the guidance of the Neighborhood Building Blocks Board, will target the specific needs of each of those communities.”

The Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund will particularly focus on supporting programs in and around Downtown Development Districts and work in conjunction with the Department of Justice’s Crime Strategies Unit. Attorney General Biden created the Crime Strategies Unit, using additional funds from the settlement with JPMorgan Chase & Co., to improve intergovernmental coordination, improve community outreach and implement cutting-edge crime-reduction strategies statewide.

Neighborhood Building Blocks Board member Fred Sears said his role as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Delaware Community Foundation has made him keenly aware of the many challenges facing Delaware’s cities and towns.

“The Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund is a welcome resource to these communities that are operating on very tight budgets,” Sears said. “These funds will provide an incentive to create programs and development projects that should provide long term benefits for the people who live and work in these communities.”

The application process is designed to identify the most effective proposals for building stable communities and neighborhoods, and to fund those proposals in an effort to improve neighborhoods throughout the State.

“We are particularly excited about the new Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund because it compliments very well other key neighborhood revitalization efforts being implemented, including the DSHA Strong Neighborhoods Fund and Governor Jack Markell’s Downtown Development District initiative,” said Anas Ben Addi, Director of the Delaware State Housing Authority. “There are many neighborhoods across the state that need redevelopment, but it will take a good plan and all of us – housing, law enforcement, private investors, faith-based groups, and, of course, the community – working together to get the job done.”

The Delaware General Assembly approved the initial Neighborhood Building Blocks funding in the Fiscal Year 2015 budget bill.

Sen. Harris B. McDowell III, D-Wilmington, co-chairman of the budget-writing Joint Finance Committee, applauded the use of money appropriated by the General Assembly to assist community development through cooperative efforts set up by the Attorney General, the Delaware State Housing Authority, JPMorgan Chase and other private sector financial institutions.

“The long-term vitality of our neighborhoods begins with civic engagement. When community leaders, homeowners, local governments and other stakeholders can come together with a path forward, it’s important they have the resources available to implement that vision,” Sen. McDowell said. “That’s what these funds will do. We’re making great progress in Delaware, but our economy will be even stronger when our hardest-hit communities can join in the recovery.”

Guidelines and the application for grants can be found on the [Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund page \(http://de.gov/50b\)](http://de.gov/50b) on the Delaware Economic Development Office's website, dedo.delaware.gov. Completed applications should be submitted via email at DEDO_NBBF@state.de.us (DEDO_NBBF@state.de.us) or through regular mail at the following address:

The Neighborhood Building Blocks Fund (NBBF)
c/o The Delaware Economic Development Office
820 North French Street
Tenth Floor
Wilmington, DE 19801

Please note that applicants may designate certain information as law enforcement sensitive, proprietary or otherwise confidential pursuant to the Delaware Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"). Consistent with FOIA, DEDO and any Reviewing Agency will take such measures as are appropriate to limit disclosure of such information.

About the Delaware Economic Development Office

The Delaware Economic Development Office is an executive state agency responsible for attracting new investors and businesses to the state, promoting the expansion of existing industry, assisting small and minority-owned businesses, promoting and developing tourism and creating new and improved employment opportunities for all citizens of the State. Visit dedo.delaware.gov.

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